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Interviewee: Haynie, Asia

Interviewer: Hellmich, Madeline

Date: 2021-04-02

Transcribed by: Zoom Live Transcription, Hellmich, Madeline

Byline: This interview was recorded as part of The Covid 19 Oral History Project, a project of the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute associated with The Journal of a Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive.

00:00:00

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay.

So my name is Madeline Hellmich, I am here with Asia Haynie. The date is April 2, 2021. The time is it, 5:35. I am in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Okay. And now I'm going to read through the legal stuff. Asia, I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift document that you signed. This interview is for the Covid 19 Oral History Project, which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive.

The Covid 19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history, focused on archiving the lived experience of the Covid 19 epidemic.

We have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open-source database.

This study will help us collect narratives and understandings about Covid 19 as well as help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings, demographic information and the verbatim transcripts will be deposited into the Journal of the Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public.

Do you have any questions about the project that I can answer?

00:01:39

Haynie, Asia:

No.

00:01:43

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to you which are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPUI or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your interviews will be recorded in digital, video and audio format and may be transcribed. The recording and possible transcriptions of your interview, copies of any supplementary documents, or additional photos that you wish to share, and the informed consent and deed of gift may be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive and the University Library system and will be available to both researchers and the general public.

Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

00:02:51

Haynie, Asia:

No.

00:02:53

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay. In addition to your signed document, would you please offer verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms?

00:03:03

Haynie, Asia:

Yes, I agree.

00:03:07

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay. I am also asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following license. And I have the Creative Commons Attribution, Noncommercial Share Alike 4.0 international license.

00:03:26

Haynie, Asia:

I agree.

00:03:29

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay. Finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available to the public immediately.

00:03:39

Haynie, Asia.

Yes, I agree.

00:03:42

Hellmich, Madeline

Okay, that's it. Now we can get into the good stuff. So, we'll just start with you. Like, what are, what is your life like on a day to day basis? What are the things that you do every day?

00:04:02

Haynie, Asia:

Um, So now, I'm a college student. And this is about like, this is like my fourth year in college, in my undergrad. And I'm a music major at Morgan State University. So, this, being a music major online is quite difficult. It's more difficult than what people would really think. People think that being a music major period is just like, Oh, it's so easy. No, no, no. It's not as easy as you think. Um, yeah, but my day to day schedule would have to consist of being in classes, doing homework, trying to catch up on sleep because being in the house for a long period of time has allowed me to be sleep deprived for over a month. And also trying to still hold on to my creative abilities as an artist and try to do other things that will allow me to work on, so I can work on myself personally and my music and my craft, outside of school, so yeah.

00:05:36

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. Do you want to say anything more about the type of music that you do or the type of art that you create?

00:05:45

Haynie, Asia:

Um, I study classical music. I am an opera singer, but I sing, outside of school, I sing R&B and I sing a little bit of gospel. I grew up singing gospel in church. I grew up in the Pentecostal church. So that's where I got my musical start. But I study classical music, so yes, I am an opera singer, but I sing R&B music and, you know, contemporary, like other types of music. So yeah.

00:06:24

Hellmich, Madeline:

Alright, so where are you living right now and what's it like to live there?

00:06:30

Haynie, Asia:

I live in Washington D.C. And it's, it's okay, like at least for right now because of like the times that we're in. It's, it's you know, it's fine. Um, but it's still kind of gets a little overwhelming because I'm not getting enough sunlight. I'm not, you know, with my friends. I'm not able to do the things that I would usually do. Like around this time, I would probably start back up dance classes. I would go back to my dance family where I used to be in a dance company growing up. And I would probably either be in the dance studio, or just hanging out, and working on music outside of the house. So yeah.

00:07:25

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. Um, Alright. So, when you first learned about Covid 19, which has been a year already, what were your thoughts about it initially? Like what was just going through your brain about what this was?

00:07:45

Haynie, Asia:

I was very confused. Being someone who has, who has chronic asthma. From what I've heard, from what I thought it was- well, what I thought it was was like maybe like a more aggressive version of the flu, which it is, but it's like even more deathly than the flu.

And for someone who has chronic asthma, I was like okay, so I really have to be careful. And then once they started enforcing wearing masks, I was just like, okay, not that big of a deal. But to see the world change literally in front of my face. I was just like, oh my god.

So I came home from school for spring break in March, the first week of March, and we got an email saying, less than three days, saying that we weren't going to come back for the rest of the school year and that everything was going to be remote. And at first I was like, I was excited because I wouldn't have to, you know, walk out of my apartment, walk the campus or whatever and have to worry about transportation. And, you know, having to go inside the classroom, but then as things started to go along, it got very overwhelming.

And then, also having to share a space with four other adults is really complicated. You would think that because you're in a house with adults that it would be simple. No, it's not. Everybody wants to do what they want to do on their own time. And sometimes, it's not always the attitude of people who live in the same house are, you know, sympathetic. So, yeah.

00:10:04

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. So, were there issues that concerned you, or how have your thoughts about Covid changed then, over the course of the pandemic?

00:10:24

Haynie, Asia:

You said how- can you repeat that one more time?

00:10:28

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah, so you kind of talked about your initial response to it. How have your thoughts about Covid 19 changed over the year as we, you know, have more information or as news developed about it?

00:10:45

Haynie, Asia:

Um. From what I know, from what I've seen, um, how, how individuals are reacting to Covid still being here and still working. Um, I know that it's not going to go away. Just like the flu.

But the world that we live in is going to be completely different. It will never go back to normal. But, um, sometimes a moment of change is always something good. Even, even in like the situation that we're in. Change is good. It, it's supposed to, this moment, the reason why we're home and the reason why we're in this situation is to teach everyone something. It might not look good on the outside. But it's allowing us to look within ourselves and observe. Like, not just how can I change the outside, but what can I change on the inside? At least that's for me.

00:11:58

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. Okay, so now we're going to talk a little bit about. We're going to move to a slightly different topic. So you already talked a little bit about how it affected school, um, how has Covid 19 changed the way that you go to school, the way that you do school?

00:12:24

Haynie, Asia:

Uh, as far as being a music student, like I said, it's more complicated than it would be in person. Um, I don't, I don't really like having to be a music student online because certain things like having voice, weekly voice lessons. Having things like missing out on student recitals and getting credit for that. And doing certain things that have to do with my craft is kind of being put to a stop because of what is going on right now.

And academically, as far as like math and biology and critical thinking, that stuff is fine. I actually prefer that to be online because that's not a part of my major, and I don't necessarily care for it. I mean, it's important, but it's not in my major. Um, but the things that I really care for is music. That's what I'm there for. That's what I'm there to get my degree for. So what's more important is that I'm able to be with my music professors so that I can be the best student that I can be overall, so yeah.

00:13:49

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. Have there been ways that you all have adapted with technology to be able to collaborate in those ways that you would have in person with the music aspect of it?

00:14:07

Haynie, Asia:

Yeah, my piano lessons are on Zoom. My voice lesson is on FaceTime because it works a little bit better, as far as like feedback.

So, when I took- last semester was my last semester of music theory and aural skills. That was much easier. At least for me, it didn't give me a whole bunch of anxiety as it would in person. Certain classes, even though it is a part of my major, does kind of bring a little anxiety. And I get a little bit overwhelmed because, it's just certain things, certain topics can allow me to feel intimidated. Especially if I don't catch on to it immediately like some people.

So yeah, but I actually prefer my voice lessons in person, because I'm able to not only feel confident about what I'm doing. But, music, hearing music live actually allows me to be as free as possible. And not just, it doesn't just affect me but it affects the person who's instructing me as well. And I feel like I can be the best artist that I can be when I have live music instead of pressing play, pressing pause. And it doesn't, it doesn't feel the same, so yeah.

00:15:44

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. Um. Has Covid affected your employment status or the employment status of those you know at all?

00:16:00

Haynie, Asia:

Yes. Um. For me personally, uh, I worked last summer, I did SYEP, which is summer youth employment program for youth people who live in the D.C. area. And, because I'm 22, there's a possibility that this might be my last year to get a job through the D.C. government. So, well at least for that program. So, it's a little difficult, and it's underpaid. Like we're very much underpaid. Because I'm about to turn 22, um, we only get like maybe 10 to 11 dollars an hour. And when I could be working at a regular retail job, or doing something else, or like having an internship that's like, maybe 15 to 19 dollars an hour.

And to me, as a struggling artist, that's not fair. To anyone that's not fair. But because as an artist, I personally have a disadvantage because the arts automatically gets pushed to the side anyway. And to me, and I feel like, this is my personal opinion, the art saves

lives. And I feel like if I weren't able to do what I was called to do, then it would be hard to live. That might sound a little dramatic, but to me, it's like that's how I live. Like that's food for the soul. That's how I live. That's how I'm able to wake up in the morning. That's how I'm able to have enough energy to go to sleep and wake up the next day and know that I have music within me and around me. So, yeah.

00:18:08

Hellmich, Madeline:

You mentioned this a little bit at the beginning, but how has Covid affecting, or how has it affected your living situation as far as like, who you're living with and how you are all living together?

00:18:26

Haynie, Asia:

Um, well because I'm home. And I live with my grandmother, my brother and my mom and my stepfather. More food has to be bought. And because I don't have a job yet, only two maybe like two and a half, like sometimes my stepfather buys food. But like between my mother and my grandmother. Like, that's who we have to depend on to, to supply the house with food and toiletries and stuff like that. So, it's a little difficult but, you know, we're, we're making it happen.

00:19:16

Hellmich, Madeline:

Um, you mentioned like the things that you usually would do to go have fun or whatever outside the house. How have you and your family or you and your friends-like, what have you been doing for fun during the pandemic?

00:19:38

Haynie, Asia:

Uh, for fun. I think the most fun that I've had was just being on FaceTime with my best friend. Uh, watching movies. Sometimes my mother and I, me, my mother, and my stepfather, we have movie nights sometimes. Sometimes my grandmother joins as well.

Recently, I have gotten the opportunity to become a part of like a singing group. So I just started going to the recording studio, about last weekend. And so I'm kind of getting a little music in there, outside of school. And a lot of things have been happening like back-to-back within this week, so I'm really excited about that. So that's how I have fun.

Oh, and thinking about certain ideas and where I want to go as far as like my personal music. As far as like my career and stuff like that so yeah.

00:21:00

Hellmich, Madeline:

The next questions are more about your community. And this can be like your community as far as like your neighborhood, your school, your church, whatever you want to define as community. So, how have the people around you been responding to the pandemic?

00:21:25

Haynie, Asia;

I've noticed some people are very, like extra pushy. Some people are very lackadaisical, like it doesn't matter. And I've actually seen people, well no, not necessarily seen them. But I know that they have been affected by Covid personally. And they'll still be extra lackadaisical. Or they'll become kind of cautious. So, yeah, but most of the time people are being very cautious and making sure that social distance is a part of the lifestyle. And, yeah.

00:22:36

Hellmich, Madeline:

Um. Has Covid affected your relationships with your community at all? Like, I know, more so at the beginning than now but, we had to isolate to flatten the curve, and everything like that was so strict and still is strict to an extent. How, how has that affected your relationships with people in your community?

00:23:12

Haynie, Asia:

In my neighborhood, not so much. In my school community. Yes. Drastically. Especially, like I said, being a music student is very hard. And it takes a lot of courage to be a music student. Especially, studying classical music or studying jazz, or any type of world music. It's very hard. And you need your community to stay sane, at least for me. And the music department is very small. And everybody pretty much knows each other. So not being in the, in the music building is a little heart wrenching. And I, I do think that it's very important that the music community, and my school community stays like really close to me as far as like, as far as that. So, yeah.

00:24:32

Hellmich, Madeline:

Um, have you seen people like using technology or other means, try to keep that community strong or rebuild the community? Just like not being able to see each other in person, how have you guys adapted to kind of keep your community, like you said, at the core of who you all are and what you're doing?

00:24:57

Haynie, Asia:

Yeah, I have a few friends who have, who have started podcasts since the pandemic has started. People are becoming more and more creative, myself included. People are still, they're finding ways to display their craft and their art, through technology, through music, through dance, whatever. And it's, it's been a beautiful thing to see. Yeah.

00:25:44

Hellmich, Madeline:

Do you think that those trends will continue even after you get to see each other in person again?

00:25:50

Haynie, Asia:

Yeah, I think so. It'll, it won't be as, as heightened. But it will still be a part of the, of the craft.

00:26:09

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay, um, I'm going to jump to a new topic. So have you or anybody that you know, been sick during the pandemic?

00:26:25

Haynie, Asia:

Um, I know a few people who have been sick. I've never been sick. Thank God. Especially, well, I usually stay in the house. I've been home since March. And I'm an introvert, well I'm an introverted extrovert. So, I usually don't really go outside unless it's for something that's really important that I need to do. So, um, I haven't gotten sick. But I

do know a few people who have got Covid. Either, having to do important things, like, you know, work, or just being lackadaisical and, you know, silly.

00:27:39

Hellmich, Madeline:

Um, in what ways do you think that Covid is affecting peoples' mental health, and or physical health?

00:27:43

Haynie, Asia:

Um, for some people. Um, I can say that, well at least from, from what I can see, it doesn't affect people as much. I know me personally, it affects me quite a lot. Due to having like a history of like anxiety and depression, sometimes like, it hits. So, I have to constantly fight my way out of that. Um, but it's a matter of my music and my craft saving me from going down the rabbit hole, and just not being well. So, yeah.

00:28:39

Hellmich, Madeline:

So, um this regards to Covid, but just in general, even before Covid. Where do you get your news and information from the most?

00:28:56

Haynie, Asia:

Usually, I would hear it, or I would see it via Instagram, because that's usually where I'm at, either Instagram or Facebook. Or my mother watches the news and sometimes my grandmother watches the news so, um, so either the news, Instagram or Facebook or, yeah.

00:29:27

Hellmich, Madeline:

How have your news sources changed at all since the pandemic started?

00:39:33

Haynie, Asia:

Um, I would watch the news every once in a while, so that's all that's really been changed. Less social media and more like news.

00:29:52

Hellmich, Madeline:

Um, what do you think are important issues that the media is covering or is not covering?

00:30:03

Haynie, Asia:

Certain states, recently, certain states still don't have clean water. For example, Mississippi. They, they talked about Texas, but they aren't talking about places like Mississippi and Louisiana that are suffering.

Not enough people are talking about discrimination against Asians, and what's been happening as far as brutality against Asians. And also, me personally, I feel like even though the protests have been going down, like they haven't been happening as much. Um, let's not forget, Black lives still matter. And it's very important that, that we still keep that in our minds. Keep that, not just keep that in our minds, but keep it in action. Make change. Be the change.

And, um, and it also has to do with, me personally, fighting for not just- yes Black people in general and, you know, people of other minorities. But making sure that people like the LGBTQ community and like other communities are like very safe during this time. Because I know that, from what I, what I've seen, there's a lot of neglect towards like Black trans women and Black trans men. And I really do believe that it is imperative that they are protected.

They, they should be protected. We all should be protected. And I believe that it's, it should be more of like a solid front when it comes to protecting Black people and protecting people of color. There's not enough of that. And, yeah, so there's not enough coverage on like the violence towards Black trans people, and Black non-binary people and Black LGBTQ community people and, you know, stuff like that, so yes.

00:33:02

Hellmich, Madeline:

Yeah. You mentioned a lot of the issues that have been brought up in protests that have coincided with the pandemic, such as Black Lives Matter, which happened across the United States and across the world. Have you seen the protests-have they had an impact on your experience, or, and or, other peoples' experiences during the pandemic?

00:33:42

Haynie, Asia:

Yes, um, I personally know a lot of people who went out and protested. I was unable to go out and protest due to my, my health issues. There were a lot of people who are out there who still had chronic health issues who just put their lives on the line. And we appreciate those people. I salute you. I wish I could have been out there. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to go because I live with an elder, and. And I would be putting myself at risk, and them as well. So, and plus my mother was like, you're not going anywhere. I know you want to go out. I want to go out too. But we, we have to be really cautious because of the circumstances that we are in right now.

So, um, but I do know that I have friends who went out downtown. My best friend, he protested for Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, where he's from. Louisville, to be exact.

And so, yeah. And to always see things going down. If it's not one thing, it's another thing. Like to see something going on every. Single. Day. It's, it's traumatizing. It's very traumatizing. Whether it be from not enough coverage on Black trans people getting killed in the streets, due to the protests, along with being trans. And George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many other people that have not gotten their justice.

It's, it's traumatizing. It's horrible. It's beyond words. And I don't, you know, I hope to see it in my, in my lifetime. But, change is happening, it's just happening slowly. But we need to speed it up. This is 2021. There's no reason why, you know, people aren't getting the justice that they deserve. So yeah.

00:36:28

Hellmich, Madeline:

I know the pandemic has been a window where the issues you know whether it be racial injustices or, you know, peoples' socio-economic statuses in this country that the pandemic has been a window where these issues are being highlighted even more than they were before.

Do you think that the protests have supported a shift in a new national conscious that will last beyond the pandemic, or do you see it kind of going back to sweeping these issues under the rug or going back to normal?

00:37:27

Haynie, Asia:

Um, there's a sense of. There is a possibility that it might go back to normal. But from what I've seen and from what I know, there has been a huge conscious awakening. It is

my hope that things don't go back to where they were. We can only go up from here. I have faith and I'm putting my trust in my community. And I'm hoping that, you know, we move in a more positive way. Um, yeah. Yeah.

00:38:21

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay, so we can kind of move on to a different topic now. In the D.C. area, since that's where you've been for most of the pandemic. All of it. How have your municipal leaders and government officials, how have they been responding to the outbreak?

00:38:50

Haynie, Asia:

Um. Hmm. I think that the more, the higher the numbers go, the more cautious they are becoming. I also feel like representation is not enough. And I feel like, okay so, having certain people in office is nice. But I feel like more things need to happen like putting, becoming more aggressive when it comes to making sure that the citizens of the United States and the world, are, are healthy. Um. As far as that, so I feel like there should be a little bit more care in that. But, from what I've seen, they're doing their best so far, so far.

00:40:35

Hellmich, Madeline:

Do you have any thoughts on how local, state, or federal leaders have been responding to the crisis differently?

Just like some states are responding differently than others that I know. I feel like maybe those differences were more apparent at the beginning than they are now that there's more of a federal response.

00:41:13

Haynie, Asia:

Yeah. um, I know some states are opening up quicker than others. I don't know why. I know eventually the world's going to end up, you know, opening back up, but that's, you know, people are still suffering. I feel like I know it's very hard to stay in these type of situations, but I feel that the numbers will not go down until people become more responsible.

And that starts with authority figures. If you know that your numbers are rising, and you want to open up certain businesses, like things that aren't essential. Then you're not helping the community at all.

I get it. We all want to, you know, go out and have fun. But what's more important, my life, or going out and getting drinks? What's, what's more important going out and getting my nails done, or you know, making sure that, you know, I don't [knocks on wood] have to have one of those, I don't have to have a machine to breathe.

Like, trust and believe, like, don't get me wrong. I have my moments where it's like, I want to go out so bad. Like I want to get my nails done. I want to go to the movies. I want to go out and get a drink. But that's not important. Unless I had to go out and get like toiletries and groceries and stuff like that. I'm not, I'm not gonna risk myself nor my family for that.

00:43:15

Hellmich, Madeline:

So, with the vaccines coming out and everything I know peoples' mindsets are more looking towards the future looking towards, if there is a finish line, of the pandemic. What can you imagine or what do you hope your life looks like a year from now, a year from now?

00:43:42

Haynie, Asia:

A year from now, I would hope that I would be able to go back to auditioning for for competitions in person. Um, I'm sorry. Um, I would hope that I would be able to perform in person. I'll be able to like at least do a little bit, like a little bit more than what I'm used to doing right now. Um, so yeah, I'm more concerned about like my career and what I'm doing, rather than like extracurricular activities. I'm 21 going on 22, like really, I'm more concerned about where am I headed, as far as my career? Like I want to, you know, get a move on it, as far as getting myself out there. Like, who is Asia? Like, really who is Nina Monii? Like, who am I as an artist? Like, will people like what I have to offer? I will never know until we get out there. So, yeah.

00:45:05

Hellmich, Madeline:

How does the pandemic compare to other big events that have happened in your life?

00:45:21

Haynie, Asia:

Um. Give me an example.

00:45:28

Hellmich, Madeline:

I don't know, just things that you think have shaped who you are along the way. Like I know, traveling, those international trips. Those have been like moments for me where I have a new perspective on life.

How does this compare to other moments where your perspective on life has changed?

00:45:58

Haynie, Asia:

Um, yeah traveling. Well, yeah, not being able to travel. I want to travel. More of it has to, less with the physical and more of like the spiritual for me. Um, I have changed drastically. I have become [silence from poor internet connection] my craft. And besides like, you know, wanting to go out and like travel and stuff like that. That's more like the being [silence from poor internet connection]. Everything is going, so yeah.

00:46:59

Hellmich, Madeline:

So, knowing what you know now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

00:47:14

Haynie, Asia:

Have a plan. Um, yeah, have a plan. And if, if something like this were to happen, which I hope not, have a plan. Like, have enough money aside to assist people, and don't wait to the last minute because I know with our last administration, it was very hard for most people who live on their own. Six hundred dollars was not enough to pay their bills. You know, take care of their children. You know, just do what you need to do. Um, so as far as that, have a plan. And have a solid plan. Be as solid as you can be. Because people, peoples' lives are in your hands. So please. Please. I beg of you. Yes.

00:48:31

Hellmich, Madeline:

Okay. Just before we wrap up, are there any last comments you'd like to make, or any thoughts that came up that you'd like to share that I didn't ask you about?

00:48:51

Haynie, Asia:

I hope that everyone stays safe. And I hope that everyone finds time to mentally check in, at least on a day to day basis. It's very important. Please don't skip out on your mental health. Don't. Don't do that. Like, if anything, if all else fails, check on yourself, and check on other people as well.

Don't overcrowd them, but give them enough space to breathe, but still allow them to know that you care. Somebody, you are there for them. Whether it be you or, you know, people in general. But like, let them know, you are not alone. We are, we're all in this together. We are stronger than this. This, this, it's very hard. It's very, very, very hard. Um, but yeah, you're not by yourself. Stay in tune. Stay in tune. Yeah.

00:50:12

Hellmich, Madeline:

Thank you.

00:50:13

Haynie, Asia:

Thank you.